

**CATEGORY "A"**

Research Memorandum  
MSB-3.27, March 22, 1962

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ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT STATE & INTENTIONS IN THE BERLIN CRISIS:  
March 15-21, 1962

**EXCISE**

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

**Negotiations.** The meetings between Secretary Khrushchev and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko at Geneva March 19 and 20 have thus far produced no changes in the basic Soviet position on Berlin and Germany. They have, however, indicated the USSR wishes to continue talks. The documents handed over by Gromyko March 19 and 20 do not depart appreciably from the standard Soviet sub-maximum position; they do, however, draw on some points in earlier US proposals, apparently in an effort to elicit further indications of US fall-back positions.

Statements of Soviet leaders repeat the threat of a separate peace treaty if agreement cannot be reached with the West, but make no reference to a deadline. Khrushchev in a speech on March 16 merely insisted the matter could not be delayed "indefinitely", but indicated that talks are "not yet complete." Moreover, he referred to the Berlin Wall (i.e., "protective measures along the frontier with West Berlin") as being of "special significance for confirmation of GDR sovereignty" and "an achievement thanks to which the Soviet Union, the GDR and all socialist countries were able to continue their struggle for the peace treaty from even stronger positions."

It was announced March 20 that GDR Foreign Minister Bolz had been called to Geneva for consultations with Gromyko and that a Swiss visa had been issued him at Gromyko's request.

Soviet propaganda coverage of the German question in general has decreased significantly since the Ulbricht-Khrushchev talks at the end of February. Only ten commentaries on the subject were noted during the week ending March 18 (compared to an average of about 30-40 weekly for the period between October and February).

**Military Demonstrations and Preparations.** Soviet activity in the Berlin air corridors continued but March 17 the Soviets shifted their tactic to begin scheduling their flights at altitudes below 7,000 feet, away from the air space most frequently utilized by commercial traffic. On March 15 there had been

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si flights in the south corridor and on March 16 four in the north, all at altitudes between 5,000 and 9,500 feet. (The March 16 flights were made at night, the first time the Soviets had scheduled flights after dark.) On March 17 the Soviets altered the pattern to fly four planes in the north corridor at heights between 2,500 and 5,500 feet. After a two-day pause, flights were again resumed March 20 with four in the south and central corridors, and on March 21 eight in the north and central corridors, all at altitudes below 6,500 feet.

On March 16 the chief Soviet controller at the Berlin Air Safety Center (BASC) informally suggested establishing a radio link between BASC and Karlshorst to permit better communications between BASC and Soviet headquarters in East Berlin since the existing telephone line was allegedly inadequate. A formal request for the radio link was submitted to the US controller March 19.

US military convoys on the autobahn were again delayed on several occasions at the Soviet checkpoints. On March 20 Soviet officers at the checkpoint attributed the delays to the fact no advance notice had been given of the convoys arrival and demanded that such notification be submitted in advance for all future military movements on the roads.

A Soviet official at Geneva, speaking to an American, asserted the current Soviet air corridor activity was directly linked to the US military movement on the autobahn to Berlin.

Tailing of US military vehicles in East Berlin increased and the GDR press accused the US Army of sending its vehicles into East Berlin to provoke incidents and create "unpleasantness." On March 18, two British military tour buses attempting to enter East Berlin were stopped by the GDR border guards and the civilian occupants of the buses ordered to submit to customs controls. The demand was rejected and the buses returned to West Berlin.

Berlin and Germany. No changes in access procedure to or within Berlin were announced during the week. New fencing has been constructed along the sector borders, some distance behind the wall, and additional obstacles erected at the Friedrichstrasse crossing point, apparently to slow down traffic. A May 28 completion date has been announced for new control buildings being built at the Friedrichstrasse railway station. GDR railway officials also announced that new tracks and a central platform will be completed at the Potsdam border station during 1962.

The GDR Volkakammer (parliament) is scheduled to meet March 28; the announced agenda for the session includes the second reading of the new GDR Customs Law.

The Yugoslav Government has protested sharply to and elicited an apology from the GDR Foreign Office over the forcible removal of six Yugoslav citizens from East German trains by GDR border guards. The Yugoslav Government has given considerable publicity to the incidents stressing the fact that some of the Yugoslavs involved were returning from the Leipzig Fair. West German commercial circles alleged the Yugoslav delegation attending the Fair displayed a highly critical attitude toward the Fair and publicly aired its criticism.

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The East German Olympic Committee has officially announced it is prepared to begin talks with the FRG Olympic Committee in preparation for the formation of an all-German team for the 1964 Olympics.

#### ASSESSMENT OF SOVIET INTENTIONS

Gromyko's performance in Geneva suggests that Moscow remains interested in extending the talks. It is evidently not prepared to make any meaningful changes in its own position until it concludes that its stonewalling tactics will not induce changes in the US position. There are no good clues as to the direction of possible modifications if and when Moscow decides to put them forward;

at any rate, would seem to hint, if at anything, at increasing Soviet adamancy in rejecting continuation of the occupation regime in West Berlin. This stance might at some point serve to shift the issue from a Four-Power context to a bilateral Soviet-West German framework — a possibility hinted at in the December 27 memorandum to the Federal Republic and occasionally suggested in ambiguous formulations by Soviet press commentators. For the moment, however, Moscow's efforts remain directed at probing US intentions and Moscow does not appear to regard itself as having arrived at a fork in the road requiring basic new decisions on how to proceed further with the negotiations.

This impression of no great sense of urgency on a Berlin settlement being conveyed by the Soviets is reinforced by Khrushchev's restrained treatment of the Berlin issue and his explicit indication that the talks would continue, a line also taken by bloc officials in Geneva. Moreover, Khrushchev appeared to suggest that the effects of the erection of the Wall had so strengthened the Soviet and GDR positions as to permit the Soviet Union to proceed without haste in moving toward its further objectives, especially if GDR "sovereignty" can meanwhile be reinforced by low-risk unilateral actions which would also tend to alter the basic de facto situation in Berlin. One of these moves which may now be in the offing is the GDR's new customs law.

If the Berlin sector border is declared an international custom frontier, it can be expected there will be increasing interference with Allied access to East Berlin. At the same time, some gestures may eventually be made to the West Berlin population permitting entry into East Berlin under terms similar to international frontier crossing. The first GDR goal, however, is likely to be making entry requirements for Germans entering East Berlin identical with those for crossing the FRG-GDR border.

The Soviet air corridor tactics, while still probably designed in part to exert pressure on the West for negotiating purposes, appear to be increasingly pointed toward changes in operational procedures in BASC and the corridors. The request for a radio link to Karlshorst, if granted, could be interpreted as tacit recognition of Soviet rights to utilize the corridors and Allied acceptance of at least partial responsibility for flight safety in connection with any situation arising out of the Soviet flights.

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revealed no significant changes in the Soviet negotiating position on Berlin, and the only justifiable conclusion to be drawn at this point is that the Soviets intend to prolong the exchanges. To that end, they will apparently be willing to exploit a variety of approaches but are not likely to alter the basic substance of their own position until they conclude that their stonewall tactics will not induce significant changes in the US position.

~~Gromyko~~'s oral remarks appear to have yielded only two points of interest.

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He evidenced increased adamancy in the Soviet stand when he asserted the USSR categorically refused to accept a continuation of the present status of West Berlin and the Western presence there. (The Soviet note specified the USSR would not accede to such a continuation de facto or de jure.) Gromyko, however, specifically related the hardening of stance on this point to the access question, hinting that agreement on the latter "should be feasible" (since the US requirements on access were allegedly now close to those of the Soviets) if the US would agree to accept a change in the occupation status.

The Soviet Foreign Minister also appeared to be insistent on a US response to the paper he handed Secretary Rusk March 19, asking for careful study of the document. His insistence may have been motivated merely by a desire to insure continuation of the talks. However, while the Soviets must be well aware of the unacceptability of the document as a whole, several of the details incorporated in its context appear to be intended to provide fodder for further discussions.

The timelimit of three to five years specified for the presence of token UN or neutral forces in West Berlin is the first official Soviet proposal in the current round for the duration of a military presence in West Berlin. This could prove to be the starting point for attempts to negotiate a three to five year limitation on a continuation of the occupation status or even an "interim" agreement of that length. (Of particular interest in the "three to five year" concept is the fact this same time span was cited by GDR official Hermann Matern last summer as an acceptable limit for the stay of Western troops in West Berlin, "but not forever.")

Gromyko's twisting the "international access authority" concept into the role of "arbiter" in case of difficulties over access of course perverts the access authority idea as originally formulated. However, in doing so, he may also be for the first time coping with

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~~The~~ question of an "arbiter of disputes" which was the subject of considerable controversy at Geneva in July 1959. (Under the Soviet proposals, Moscow would presumably retain a veto over decisions rendered by the authority, though this is not explicitly stated.)

The fact that a "working paper" amplifying paragraph 4 of the document -- civilian access -- was passed March 20 may imply that an additional paper spelling out terms of military access (paragraph 6) is also in the offing. In any event, the Soviet formulations on military traffic in some respects resemble elements in the Western position ("agency" concept) which have been discussed in the Western press.

The "working paper" on civilian access itself gives some indication of being a GDR-drafted document and may even have been prepared as early as June 1961. In any event, practically all of its points were reflected or specified in the public utterances of Ulbricht and his cohorts during June and July of last year. The Soviet purpose in passing the document is as yet obscure since the Soviets are hardly likely to have believed it would convince the US of the desirability of all-encompassing GDR control of civilian transit traffic. The paper however, may have been intended as part of the Soviet effort to "document its case" for the future. What is catalogued here is a statement of optimum GDR formal demands regarding civil access; many of its provisions have already been implemented unilaterally and actions may be taken in the near future to adopt others.

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The bulk of the provisions relating to access (with the exception of those requiring Western agreement or participation) have already been incorporated into GDR legislation, and the laws themselves are gradually being implemented step by step. Sections three, four, eight, and nine, on land and water transit and communications already apply de facto. Section six has been accepted for some time -- Otto Winzer's February interpretation of passport and visa requirement for West Germans specifically adjusts this section to the existing situation. The customs law expected to be enacted next week provides the legal framework for section seven. The provisions in section five, on civilian air traffic, are already covered by GDR legislation, and the current Soviet campaign in the air corridors appears designed in part to effectuate some aspects of these laws.

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